

Glossary on LGBTQIA++ relevant terminology

The terms and definitions below are always evolving and changing and often mean different things to different people.

This glossary was written to help give people the words and meaning to help make conversations easier and more comfortable.



Agender	adj. : a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.
Ally	A person who is not LGBTQ but shows support for LGBTQ people and promotes equality in a variety of ways.
Allosexism	The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses asexual people built out of the assumption that everyone does and should experience sexual attraction.
Allosexual	A sexual orientation generally characterized by feeling sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality.
Androgynous	Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.
Asexual	A broad spectrum of sexual orientations generally characterized by feeling varying degrees of sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. Some asexual people do have sex and do experience varying levels of sexual attraction. There are many diverse ways of being asexual. A person who does not experience sexual attraction can experience other forms of attraction such as romantic attraction, as physical attraction and emotional attraction are separate aspects of a person's identity.
Bicurious	adj. : a curiosity toward experiencing attraction to people of the same gender/sex (similar to questioning).
BDSM	Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism. BDSM refers to a wide spectrum of activities and forms of interpersonal relationships.

While not always overtly sexual in nature, the activities and relationships within a BDSM context are almost always eroticized by the participants in some fashion. Many of these practices fall outside of commonly held social norms regarding sexuality and human relationships.

Bear Community A part of the queer community composed of queer men similar in looks and interests, most of them big, hairy, friendly and affectionate. The community aims to provide spaces where one feels wanted, desired, and liked. It nourishes and values an individual's process of making friends and learning self-care and self-love through the unity and support of the community. Bears, Cubs, Otters, Wolves, Chasers, Admirers and other wildlife comprise what has come to be known as the Brotherhood of Bears and/or the Bear community.

Bigender Having two genders, exhibiting cultural characteristics of masculine and feminine roles.

Binder noun : an undergarment used to alter or reduce the appearance of one's breasts (worn similarly to how one wears a sports bra). binding – adj. : the (sometimes daily) process of wearing a binder. Binding is often used to change the way other's read/perceive one's anatomical sex characteristics, and/or as a form of gender expression.

Biphobia Prejudice, fear, or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

Bisexual A person emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender, or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

Butch A gender expression that fits societal definitions of masculinity. Usually used by queer women and trans people, particularly by lesbians. Some consider "butch" to be its own gender identity.

Cisgender A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

"Cis" is a Latin prefix that means "on the same side [as]" or "on this side [of]."



Closeted	Describes an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.
Coming out	The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others. A popular misconception is this happens once. Coming out is, however, a continuous, lifelong process. Every day, all the time, one must evaluate and re-evaluate who they are comfortable coming out to, if it is safe, and what the consequences might be.
Cross Dresser (CD)	A word to describe a person who dresses, at least partially, as a member of a gender other than their assigned sex; carries no implications of sexual orientation. Has replaced "Transvestite."
Demiromantic	adj. : little or no capacity to experience romantic attraction until a strong sexual connection is formed with someone, often within a sexual relationship.
Demisexual	Demisexuality is a sexual orientation in which someone feels sexual attraction only to people with whom they have an emotional bond. Most demisexuals feel sexual attraction rarely compared to the general population, and some have little to no interest in sexual activity. Demisexuals are considered to be on the asexual spectrum.
Discrimination	Inequitable actions carried out by members of a dominant group or its representatives against members of a marginalized or minoritized group.
Down low	adj. : typically referring to men who identify as straight but who secretly have sex with men. Down low (or DL) originated in, and is most commonly used by, communities of color.
Drag King	A person (often a woman) who appears as a man. Generally, in reference to an act or performance. This has no implications regarding gender identity.
Drag Queen	A person (often a man) who appears as a woman. Generally, in reference to an act or performance. This has no implications regarding gender identity.

Dyke	noun : referring to a masculine presenting lesbian. While often used derogatorily, it is also reclaimed affirmatively by some lesbians and gay women as a positive self-identity term.
Fag(got)	noun : derogatory term referring to a gay person, or someone perceived as queer. While often used derogatorily, it is also used reclaimed by some gay people (often gay men) as a positive in-group term.
Femme	Historically used in the lesbian community, it is being increasingly used by other LGBTQIA people to describe gender expressions that reclaim and disrupt traditional constructs of femininity.
Gay	A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.
Gender dysphoria	Clinically significant distress caused when a person’s assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the term – which replaces Gender Identity Disorder – is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults.
Gender-expansive	Conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression that typically associated with the binary gender system.
Gender expression	External appearance of one’s gender identity, usually expressed through behaviour, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviours and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.
Gender-fluid	According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a person who does not identify with a single fixed gender; of or relating to a person having or expressing a fluid or unfixed gender identity.
Gender identity	One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Genderism / Cissexism	Is the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders & that one's gender or most aspects of it, are inevitably tied to assigned sex. In a genderist/cissexist construct, cisgender people are the dominant/agent group and trans/ gender non-conforming people are the oppressed/target group.
Gender non-conforming	A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.
Gender Queer	The "queer" aspect of "genderqueer" is the reclaimed, affirmative, empowering usage of "queer." This is not a slur or derogatory term. Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.
Gender transition	The process by which some people strive to align their internal knowledge or gender more closely with its outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.
Hermaphrodite	noun : an outdated medical term previously used to refer to someone who was born with some combination of typically-male and typically-female sex characteristics. It's considered stigmatizing and inaccurate.
Heteronormativity	Attitudes and behaviors that incorrectly assume gender is binary, ignoring genders besides women and men, and that people should and will align with conventional expectations of society for gender identity, gender expression, and sexual and romantic attraction. For example, someone assigned female at birth is expected to 1) have a body that is considered "female" by the dominant culture, 2) identify as a girl or woman, 3) act feminine and fulfill the roles associated with girls and/or women, and 4) be romantically and sexually attracted to men.

Heterosexism	The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression, which reinforces realities of silence and erasure.
Heterosexuality	A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.
Homophobia	The fear and hatred of /or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.
Homosexual / Homosexuality	An outdated term to describe a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. Historically, it was a term used to pathologize gay and lesbian people.
Internalized oppression	The fear and self-hate of one or more of a person's own identities that occurs for many individuals who have learned negative ideas about their identities throughout childhood. One form of internalized oppression is the acceptance of the myths and stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.
Intersex	An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, and in others, they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.
Kink (Kinky, Kinkiness)	Most commonly referred to as unconventional sexual practices, from which people derive varying forms of pleasure and consensually play-out various forms of desires, fantasies, and scenes.
Leather community	A community which encompasses those who enjoy sexual activities involving leather, including leather uniforms or cowboy outfits, and is related to similar fetish-based communities such as sado-masochism, bondage and domination, and rubber. Although the leather community is often associated with the queer community, it is not a "gay-only" community.
Lesbian	A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.

LGBTQ	An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer.”
Living openly	A state in which LGBTQ people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or gender identity – where and when it feels appropriate to them.
Metrosexual	adj. : a man with a strong aesthetic sense who spends more time, energy, or money on his appearance and grooming than is considered gender normative.
Microaggressions	Brief and subtle behaviors, whether intentional or not, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages of commonly oppressed identities. These actions cause harm through the invalidation of the target person’s identity and may reinforce stereotypes. Examples of microaggressions include someone saying something is “gay” to mean they think something is bad.
Misgendering	Attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect/does not align with their gender identity. Can occur when using pronouns, gendered language (i.e. “Hello ladies!” “Hey guys”), or assigning genders to people without knowing how they identify (i.e. “Well, since we’re all women in this room, we understand...”).
MLM	An abbreviation for men who love men, which includes gay men as well as men who are attracted to men and people of other genders.
Monogamy	Having only one intimate partner at any one time; also known as serial monogamy, since “true” monogamy refers to the practice of having only one partner for life (such as in some animal species).
Monosexism	The belief in and systematic privileging of monosexuality as superior, and the systematic oppression of non-monosexuality.
Monosexual	People who have romantic, sexual, or affectional desire for one gender only. Heterosexuality and homosexuality are the most well-known forms of monosexuality.
MSM	An abbreviation for men who have sex with men; they may or may not identify as gay.

Mx.	noun : an honorific (e.g. Mr., Ms., Mrs., etc.) that is gender neutral. It is often the option of choice for folks who do not identify within the gender binary: Mx. Smith is a great teacher.
Non-binary	An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do.
Omnigender	Possessing all genders. The term is used specifically to refute the concept of only two genders.
Outing	Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situation.
Pansexual	Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.
PGPs	abbr. : preferred gender pronouns. Often used during introductions, becoming more common as a standard practice. Many suggest removing the "preferred," because it indicates flexibility and/or the power for the speaker to decide which pronouns to use for someone else.
Polyamory	Denotes consensually being in/open to multiple loving relationships at the same time. Some polyamorists (polyamorous people) consider "polyam" to be a relationship orientation. Sometimes used as an umbrella term for all forms of ethical, consensual, and loving non-monogamy.
Queer	It refers to the umbrella term to be more inclusive of the many fluid identities, orientations and variations that make up the LGBTQ+ community. Often used interchangeably with "LGBTQ."
Questioning	A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Romantic Orientation	Romantic Orientation is attraction or non-attraction to other people characterized by the expression or non-expression of love. Romantic orientation can be fluid and people use a variety of labels to describe their romantic orientation.
Same-gender loving	A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.
Sex assigned at birth	The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy. This is also referred to as "assigned sex at birth."
Sexual orientation	An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.
Sex reassignment surgery (SRS)	noun : used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's biological sex. "Gender confirmation surgery" is considered by many to be a more affirming term. In most cases, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Some refer to different surgical procedures as "top" surgery and "bottom" surgery to discuss what type of surgery they are having without having to be more explicit.
Sexuality vs. Gender	Sexual orientation is who you go to bed with. Gender Identity is who you go to bed as.
SOGIE	An acronym that stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression. Is used by some in a similar way to the umbrella acronym: LGBTQIA.
Trans	The term trans acts as a more inclusive term than transgender for gender non-conforming and non-binary folks.
Trans man	A person may choose to identify this way to capture their gender identity as well as their lived experience as a transgender person.
Trans woman	A person may choose to identify this way to capture their gender identity as well as their lived experience as a transgender person.



Transgender	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.
Transition	Transitioning is the process of taking steps to live as one’s true gender identity. Transitioning is different for each individual and may or may not involve medical interventions like taking hormones or having surgery. Some people may not choose to transition in certain ways for a variety of reasons. The extent of someone’s transition does not make that person’s gender identity any less or more valid.
Transphobia	The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with transgender people.
Two Spirit	An umbrella term encompassing sexuality and gender in Indigenous Native American communities. Two Spirit people often serve integral and important roles in their communities, such as leaders and healers. It may refer to an embodiment of masculinity and femininity, but this is not the only significance of the term. There are a variety of definitions and feelings about the term two spirit – and this term does not resonate for everyone. Two Spirit is a cultural term reserved for those who identify as Indigenous Native American. Although the term itself became more commonly used around 1990, two spirit people have existed for centuries.
Ursula	Some lesbians, particularly butch dykes, also participate in Bear culture referring to themselves with the distinct label Ursula.
Womxn	Some womxn spell the word with an “x” as a form of empowerment to move away from the “men” in the “traditional” spelling of women.
Zie & Hir	The most common spelling for gender neutral pronouns. Zie is subjective (replaces he or she) and Hir is possessive and objective (replaces his or her).

