



LGBTQ+ List of Terminology

I am glad you are here.



This list can be a helpful tool for LGBTQ+ allies, or those looking to become more educated on correct terminology. If you are here because you aren't sure what label you identify with, or you are getting curious, that is completely acceptable. Go easy on yourself and try not to get too hung up on the labels and definitions. Labels can be wonderful tools to help us and others understand who we are and allow us to feel seen; at the same time, you are more than your label!

Ally: A heterosexual and/or cisgender person who believes in, supports and celebrates all people of all queer identities. Allies are open to challenging queer-phobic, heterosexist remarks and the actions of others, and are willing to explore these biases within themselves on an ongoing basis. Acting as an ally to LGBTQ+ communities means a constant re-assessment of one's surroundings in terms of their inclusion of, and accessibility to, community members.

Asexual: Someone who does not experience sexual desire for people of any gender, or has little or no interest in sexual activity. Some asexual people desire romantic relationships, while others do not. Asexuality can be considered a spectrum, with some asexual people experiencing desire for varying types of intimacy.

Bisexual: An individual who is attracted to, and may form sexual and romantic relationships with women and men. Some bisexual people use this term to express attraction to both their own sex and/or gender, as well as to people of a different sex and/or gender; this ratio of attraction may vary over time. Bisexuality, like homosexuality and heterosexuality, may be either a period in the process of self-discovery, or a stable, long-term identity. It is not necessary for somebody to have or have had sexual intercourse with both men and women to identify as bisexual.

Cisgender: Identifying with the same gender that one was assigned at birth. A gender identity that society considers to match the biological sex assigned at birth.

Cis-normativity: A cultural and societal bias, often unconscious, that privileges cisgender identities and gender norms, and ignores or underrepresents trans identities and/or gender diversity by assuming that all people are cisgender and will express their gender in a way that aligns with perceived gender norms.

Coming Out: 'Coming out of the closet,' is the process of becoming aware of one's queer sexual orientation and one's identity, accepting it, and telling others about it. This is an ongoing process that may not include everybody in all aspects of one's life. 'Coming out' usually occurs in stages and is a non-linear process. An individual may be 'out' in only some situations or to certain family members or associates and not others. Some may never 'come out' to anyone beside themselves.

Gay: A person who is mostly attracted to those of the same gender. Gay can include male-identified individuals and female-identified individuals.

Gender: A system/social construction of concepts created to classify people, such as "masculine" and "feminine" in a specific culture in time. Gender is fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth.

Gender expression: How one outwardly manifests gender; for example, through name and pronoun choice, style of dress, voice modulation, etc. How one expresses gender might not necessarily reflect one's actual gender identity.

Gender identity: One's internal and psychological sense of oneself as male, female, both, in between, neither, and everything else along the gender spectrum at any point in time. Gender identity is internal and may not be visible to others. Gender non-conforming, gender variant, or genderqueer are some terms sometimes used to describe people who don't feel they fit into the categories of male or female, which are socially constructed categories.

Genderqueer: A term which refers to people who identify outside of the male-female binary. Individuals who identify as genderqueer may move between genders, identify with multiple genders, or reject the gender binary or gender altogether. Genderqueer people may experience erasure if they are perceived as cisgender.

Heteronormativity: The idea that heterosexuality is the presumed norm and is superior to other sexual orientations. A cultural and societal bias, often unconscious, that privileges heterosexuality, and ignores or underrepresents diversity in attraction and behaviour by assuming all people are heterosexual.

Homophobia: Fear or hatred of and discrimination against homosexuality. There are many levels and forms of homophobia, including cultural/institutional homophobia, interpersonal homophobia, and internalized homophobia. Many of the problems faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, including health and income disparities, stem from homophobia and heteronormative language.

Homosexual: A person who is mostly attracted to people of their own gender. This term has been widely used fairly negatively and/or in a harsh and clinical way, so most homosexuals prefer other terms.

Intersex: Refers to someone whose hormonal, chromosomal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside the conventional classifications of male or female. 'Intersex' has replaced the term 'hermaphrodite', which is considered to be outdated, inaccurate and offensive. The designation "intersex" can be experienced as stigmatizing given the history of medical practitioners imposing it as a diagnosis in need of correction, often through non-consensual surgical interventions on infants/children.

Lesbian: A woman who is primarily romantically and sexually attracted to women.

Pansexual: A person who experiences attraction to people of diverse sexes and/or genders. The term pansexual reflects a desire to recognize the potential for attraction to sexes and/or genders that exist across a spectrum and to challenge the sex/gender binary.

QPOC: An acronym for Queer People Of Colour. Another term used is QTIPOC (Queer, Transgender, and Intersex People of Colour). People of colour who identify as queer often experience intersecting oppressions on the basis of their race, as well as their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Queer: A term becoming more widely used among LGBTQ+ communities because of its inclusiveness. 'Queer' can be used to refer to the range of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender people.

Sex: Refers to the biological characteristics that we assign to humans as male, female or intersex. It is determined by anatomical/reproductive anatomy and genetic make-up. Sex and gender are NOT interchangeable terms.

Transgender: A person who does not identify either fully or in part with the gender associated with the sex assigned to them at birth—often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities and expressions. 'Transgender' is frequently abbreviated to 'trans' or 'trans*'. The asterisk is intended to actively

include non-binary and/or non-static gender identities such as genderqueer and genderfluid. Some of the many people who may or may not identify as transgender, trans, or trans* include people on the male-to-female or female-to-male spectrums, people who identify and/or express their gender outside of the male/female binary, people whose gender identity and/or expression is fluid, people who explore gender for pleasure or performance, and many more. Identifying as transgender, trans, or trans* is something that can only be decided by an individual for themselves and does not depend on criteria such as surgery or hormone treatment status.

Two-Spirit: An English term used in different Indigenous languages to describe people with diverse gender identities, gender expressions, gender roles, and sexual orientations. Dual-gendered, or 'two-spirited,' people have been and are viewed differently in different First Nations communities. Two Spirit people were often recognized for their unique abilities to understand and move between masculine and feminine perspectives, acting as visionaries, and healers. Some Indigenous people identify as Two Spirit rather than, or in addition to, identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer.

Definitions have been written by and adapted from a variety of LGBTQ+ sources, as well as through my own experience and education as a Queer, cis-gendered, woman and therapist.



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